

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

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FRENCH CHRISTIANS AND THE REQUISITION OF LABOUR

The following message, whose importance requires no emphasis, was read in all the Protestant Churches of France on Sunday, May 2nd, 1943:

"In the trouble into which so many French families have been plunged to-day, the Church of Jesus Christ cannot keep silence before its members. While thousands of homes are being destroyed or dismembered, while their heads and their sons are being constrained to go and work far from their native soil, among dangers faced for a cause which they have not chosen, the Churches of France desire to stand beside their children and tell them, first what they have done, what they desire to do for them, and then what they ask them to do in their turn.

"There is an irreducible opposition between the Gospel which the Church has received in trust and any conception of man or society which tends to envisage labour as a merchandise which one has a right to buy or requisition at will, without regard to the person, the conscience, or the most sacred feelings of the labourer. The Church can neither ignore nor pass over in silence this opposition. Therefore the President of the Council of the Protestant Federation has made a direct approach to the head of the Government to inform him of the painful emotion which the measures taken in this field have aroused in all Christian circles, and which has already been expressed by the highest authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

"Furthermore, the Council of the Federation is sure that the pastors have not waited for an invitation before exercising

the ministry of encouragement, consolation, and hope among those who are leaving or who are seeing their loved ones leave. It asks every parish to surround with its solicitude and its prayers all the groups which are affected by this trial, and especially the working class, which is most directly hit.

"As for those who have already gone, the Church is doing its best to make up for its inability to send French pastors among them. In so far as it knows the addresses of French Protestant workers in Germany, it is endeavouring to bring them together and put them in touch with one another; it is sending them periodicals or special publications, and maintaining with them a correspondence of such a kind as to keep them in an atmosphere of Christian solicitude and living piety. It is therefore essential that all the addresses of Protestants affected by the requisition of labour should be sent through the pastors to the Central Evangelical Society, which has been charged with this service.

"Finally, the Church also has the duty of telling its children what it expects of them, at an hour when terrible problems of conscience are facing everyone. In face of a future filled with terrible unknown quantities, it asks them to maintain a complete faithfulness to their vocation as Christians and to their duty as Frenchmen whatever may happen, and to give everywhere the example of faith, courage, and firmness of soul, like men who are supported by the living God and are of the lineage of Christ. It must be possible to say of every one of them: 'He endures, as seeing Him who is invisible.'"

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FRENCH PROTESTANTS ON THE LIMITS OF STATE AUTHORITY

The French Protestant magazine, *Le Christianisme au XX^e Siècle*, published on February 18th, 1943, a summary of a Bible study on "Nation and State in the Bible," worked out by members of the French Protestant Youth Council desirous of helping leaders of youth groups to find their way through the civic problems of the present time. It emphasises the vital importance of these problems, which are arising with growing acuteness. After describing the significance of nation and state, which are both willed by God, the study makes the following remarks:

"It is not necessary for the Christian to assume without question that every political authority is being exercised in conformity with the vocation it has from God, and on which it is founded. On the other hand, he must not make arbitrary criticisms of the authority. Nor must he judge it according to the Christian norms of his own life as a believer saved by Jesus Christ. He must judge it according to the Biblical criteria for the State, seeking solely to discover whether it is or is not fulfilling its specific function as a State.

"This judgment is always difficult, and constantly runs the risk of being clouded by preference or passion. The 'discernment of spirits' is a gift of the Holy Spirit given to the Church, and it is the Church first of all which is charged to make a pronouncement, by saying to the State that it must fulfil its mission as a State.

"The prophetic ministry of the Christian remains necessary if the Church does not fulfil its prophetic mission as a Church. When the Church is unfaithful, and keeps silent when it ought to speak, God is always able to raise up men who recall Church and State to their true vocation. The Word of God forbids us both the easy conformity which consents to the earthly city being sinful and outside the Kingdom of God, and also the Utopian confusion which thinks it can make non-Christians live as Christians and implant the Kingdom of God in this earthly economy. . . ."

NORWAY: DEAN ARNE FJELLBU

The former Dean of Trondheim, Arne Fjellbu, has for some time been preaching regularly in the chapel of Hvitsten, near Dröbak, a little town in the Oslo Fjord—according to *Svenska Morgonbladet*.

The fact that Dean Fjellbu was officiating at Hvitsten infuriated the cousin of the Nazi "bishop" Frøyland, who is the sacristan of this church.

It was announced that Fjellbu would

preach on Easter Monday. Sacristan Frøyland vowed to move heaven and earth to prevent this sermon.

On Easter Day a police agent arrived from Oslo on a motor-bicycle in order to forbid Dean Fjellbu to preach the following day. The Dean replied that such a prohibition was in contradiction to the Bible and the Word of God. "Rules are not sufficient to prevent the preaching of the Word of God," he said, "it is necessary to employ force."

The police agent returned to Oslo to report this reply to his chief. But the following day he returned and then presented himself as the "force" which would prevent Fjellbu from preaching.

Instead of Dean Fjellbu, Pastor Hostad preached and read the Easter Gospel. He explained to the parishioners what had occurred to Fjellbu and how he was under the guard of the police, who were preventing him from preaching as announced. Hostad then suggested that the parishioners should sing the hymn "Kirken den ar ett gammalt hus" (The Church is an ancient house), after which the congregation left, much moved. As they went out the looks which they directed towards Sacristan Frøyland showed him that they knew that it was he who was responsible for the prohibition imposed on Fjellbu.

The same paper reports: Pastors Bastiansen and Edwin, who were formerly on the staff of the Lutheran parish called Kampen, at Oslo, have received permission from the Nazi "bishop" Frøyland to continue their ministry in their parish church. They had been dismissed last year, and since that time had conducted religious services in the parish hall. The Nazis who replaced them never had more than two people at their services on Sunday. When the Quislings went they took the Church robes of Pastor Edwin; they could not lay their hands on those belonging to Pastor Bastiansen, which were not at the house. For this reason Pastor Bastiansen wore his robes, while Edwin was in "civilian" clothes when they were once again in the choir of their church, in the presence of their reassembled congregation. They read the following declaration:

"If we now have the opportunity of coming together here, after a year's absence, for the regular service in our church, it is thanks to the mercy of God and the resolute attitude of our parishioners. The usurpation on the part of the public authorities of which our parish has been a victim has ended and the people put in our place have been recalled. We thank our parishioners for the confidence and sym-

pathy which they have shown during this year of trial. We also thank the committee of the Association of Enerhaugen, who gave us the opportunity of assembling our parishioners on Sunday for service, Communion, and sermons. It is after conferring with the Council of the Church and the Temporary Church Leadership that we can now serve again in our church.

"Nevertheless, we declare energetically that in the future we shall not be officials of the State, and that we have no relations with the Minister for Church Affairs or with the new Church Council. (Established by Quisling.—Ed.) We will remain faithful to the 'Foundation of the Church,' the proclamation of the Church which was read to you on Easter Day last year. We recognise only Dr. Eivind Berggrav as our lawful bishop.

"Pastor Edwin desires to add that the police have not yet returned his Church robes and that he is consequently obliged to exercise his ministry without them."

GENERAL CHIANG KAI-SHEK ADDRESSES THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL

According to an Associated Press despatch dated Chungking, May 18th, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek gave an address at a Conference of the National Christian Council which was assembled at Chungking.

He praised the Christian Church and its missionaries in China to-day and said the "abolition of unequal treaties had freed the Christian Church from all association with foreign imperialism or aggression."

Speaking of Missionary Societies, he said: "We still need them and welcome Christians from other lands who serve the people of China with true sympathy and devotion. Don't feel you are guests. You are comrades working with us to save our people and build a new nation.

"Christians from abroad and Christians in China are on the same footing and can work wholeheartedly together for the reconstruction of China," Chiang said. "From now on there should be much closer relations between the Chinese and Western Christians."

He urged the Church of China to proclaim more widely its teachings and to broaden the scope of its work, particularly in public health.

"Let the Church identify itself more intimately with the life and needs of the people and co-operate fully with the Government and social welfare agencies and build a heaven in society," he said. "When

there is opportunity the Church should not hesitate to take a lead in social service."

GREEK CLERGY OFFER THEM- SELVES FOR THEIR PEOPLE

In a review of the position of the Orthodox Church in Greece, the Swiss paper *Semur Vaudois* of April 24th tells of a sacrificial offer by the Greek Orthodox clergy for the sake of their people. The paper speaks of the execution of hostages who pay for the acts of sabotage, the activities of guerrillas, the assassinations, the innumerable deeds which spring from the nature of things under the occupation. . . .

"Some months ago the German authorities received the Metropolitan of Athens in private audience. He went straight to the point:—

"I protest," he said in substance, 'against this violation of the rights of the person. You believe that the massacre of innocent people is indispensable for the maintenance of order. Allow me to inform you of those who could eventually die if need be, and those who ought not to die. You kill fathers; after their death their families are broken without support, without bread. You kill sons; after their death their families lose a moral and material support, a pillar very often unique and irreplaceable. You proceed to take intellectuals, men of great value, as hostages. I have with me a list of persons whom you could shoot, without society suffering immeasurably by it, without their loss occasioning the ruin of the home.'

"Show us this list."

"The Metropolitan offered several sheets of paper to the German chief. At the head of the list was his own name. There followed the names of all the Greek clergy.

"The German authorities were opposed to this offer, asserting that such an attitude on their part would, on the one hand, deepen still more the chasm between the Greek people and the occupiers, and, on the other hand, would suggest to the rest of the world that Germany, was persecuting the Greek Church."

NOTHING WILL MAKE DUTCH STUDENTS SIGN!

The latest development in the students' war against the Dutch Nazis is the closing, on Seyss-Inquart's order, of the three great denominational universities—two Catholic (Nijmegen University and Tilburg Commercial High School), one Calvinist (Free University of Amsterdam). The term denominational in this connection means colleges run by church endow-

ments as opposed to State or municipal universities.

Seyss-Inquart's declaration of "loyalty," the wording of which discloses that it is merely a pledge of obedience to the occupation authorities' decrees, remains unsigned by 85 to 90 out of every hundred students.

The text of the declaration says merely:

"The undersigned
residing at
hereby solemnly declares that he will carry out in honour and conscience the orders and regulations issued by the occupying power and the Netherlands authorities, and will refrain from any action directed against the German Reich, the German military or any Netherlands official institutions."

The Germans have published certain figures purporting to show that "20 per cent. of the students at Amsterdam and 25 per cent. of those at Delft signed the declaration."

This is a gross distortion of the facts. The number of those who signed at Amsterdam and Delft includes all those who, when Leyden was closed down long before the present developments, were so anxious to complete their studies that they transferred to Amsterdam. To give a true picture, Amsterdam's acceptances of the declaration should therefore have been calculated on the combined total of matriculations for Leyden, Amsterdam, and Delft. Instead of 25, the percentage is then seen to be rather less than 10.

In the meantime the *Essener National Zeitung* reports that 4,000 Dutch students have already been deported to the Reich.

All the universities remain closed, and even of Delft, in which the Germans are particularly interested because it provides technical training, they can only say that "lectures will be resumed in the near future."

THE CHURCHES AND RECONSTRUCTION

Reply of the Free Church Federal Council to the Statement issued by the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America

"In accordance with our message dated April 6th, 1943, sent to the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America by the hand of the Rev. Dr. J. H. Rushbrooke, the General Purposes Committee of the Free Church Federal Council has given further consideration to the important and valuable report on "A Just and

Durable Peace." The Committee now desires to renew its greetings to the Federal Council and to send this further interim message.

"(1) We rejoice to know that you and we are of one mind in recognising that it is the duty and responsibility of Christians of all Churches, in our nation as in yours, to apply themselves to the study of the political decisions which will have to be made when hostilities cease, and which must be thought out in principle before the war ends.

"(2) We report to you that there is already in this country growing interest in and study of these questions, fostered by the Churches, based upon the "Ten Points" set forth jointly on December 21st, 1940, by the then Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council, and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.

"(3) We recognise that the Six Points of your Statement are more specific with reference to the international political organisation of a just and durable peace than the "Ten Points" pretend to be; but we believe that the Foreword to your Statement shows that you also recognise that the acceptance of such general premises is a necessary condition for advocacy of your Six Points, and that both you and we would be at one in placing the source of any authority to advocate them in their accordance with that moral law of justice and mercy which is exhibited in Jesus Christ as the Will of God.

"(4) It is our intention to commend your Statement to careful study in our constituent evangelical Free Churches, in order that your guidance may be made available for as many of our people as possible.

"(5) Each of our Churches, as you will know, is officially represented on the British Council of Churches, together with the Church of England and certain Interdenominational Associations. Your Statement is being carefully studied by the British Council; and the Free Church Federal Council does not therefore consider it desirable meanwhile to send independent detailed comments on your Statement, but through its members on the British Council will fully co-operate in the Reply to be sent by that Council on behalf of all the Churches represented in it.

"We share with you the hope that the purposes and decisions of our two nations, and all united with us, may be guided and governed by God's good Spirit, to the healing of the nations and the establishment of peace in righteousness."